

# Understanding post-programme graduation trajectories in Burundi

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ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES

- **Graduation programmes can have very positive impacts of a wide range of indicators** – in Burundi positive impacts were seen in the ownership of productive and domestic assets, living conditions, food security, and sanitation and health practices.
- **Graduation participants can still be vulnerable to large shocks** – participants in Burundi experienced a drop in the levels of wealth and well-being three years after the end of the programme, primarily as a result of drought and instability.
- **Graduation participants feel more confident about being able to improve their lives** – despite the deteriorations in living conditions, programme participants feel that their lives are still better than before they participated in the graduation programme and feel better able to improve their lives again compared to others.
- **There is a need to address the challenges of sustaining positive impacts of a graduation programme in the event of a large shock** – this could be through focusing on durable solutions, wider diversification of income generating activities, greater focus on household dynamics and setting up a contingency fund to support continued engagement with participants..



Euphemia Inina (42) mother of Alphonsine Niyonzima (21) waters their market garden at her home in Mabayi, Cibitoke. As part of the Graduation Programme all participants are given seeds and training on how to grow food in their gardens. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith / Concern Worldwide

Concern Worldwide started implementing the *Terintambwe* graduation programme in Burundi in 2013. A total of 2,000 households participated in the first cohort of the programme in Cibitoke and Kirundo provinces over a 2-year period. The research that is presented in this briefing paper assessed whether the benefits of the *Terintambwe* programme were sustained after participants stopped receiving support in 2015. It aimed to understand how people's situations may have changed, and the factors that influenced whether programme participants were able to maintain positive impacts. It also considered the role of different programme components in such changes.

For practical reasons, this research only took place in Kirundo province. This province faced widespread drought from late 2015 into early 2017. People in this area were also affected by

## Understanding post-programme graduation trajectories in Burundi

general levels of instability since 2015. In combination, these shocks have left former Terintambwe participants in Kirundo particularly vulnerable since the end of the programme. Findings in this research can therefore not be generalised across Burundi and experiences with *Terintambwe* elsewhere, such as Cibitoke. However, the context of large covariate shocks does offer information about how former participants respond to and cope with such shocks, and allows for recommendations on how to improve resilience to shocks for the future and for other programmes

Fieldwork for the research was undertaken from March to April 2018. It included key informant interviews with Terintambwe staff, focus group discussions and case study activities with former Terintambwe participants. This data was complemented by quantitative and qualitative data that collected from 2013 through to 2015 as part of the Terintambwe programme evaluation.

### The **TERINTAMBWE** Programme

The *Terintambwe* programme in Burundi provides an extensive package of sequenced support to carefully targeted programme participants including

- **income support**, consisting of 12 monthly cash transfers of approximately US\$15;
- **asset transfer**, comprising of three lump-sum payments to support investments in selected income-generating activities;
- **access to savings facilities**, including support to join or establish a Savings and Internal Lending Community (SILC); and
- **skills training and coaching**, on livelihoods activities and individual coaching through home visits by dedicated case managers.

The initial impact evaluation of the Terintambwe programme in 2015 that the programme had very positive impacts on a wide range of indicators, including productive and domestic assets, living conditions, food security, and sanitation and health practices. Participants clearly felt empowered by the combination of different types of support, having started income-generating activities (IGAs) and being part of SILCs<sup>1</sup>.

## Graduation trajectories

Three years later, the majority of participants experienced a considerable drop in their levels of wealth and wellbeing. Most participants were unable to maintain the positive impacts of the programme. Many participants stopped their IGAs, sold of their assets such as iron sheets and livestock, and experienced a deterioration in their living conditions.

Despite these deteriorations in living conditions, most participants stressed that their lives were still better than before the start of the programme. Some were now less reliant on day labour than before due to having obtained land or undertaking economic activities of their own. Roughly half of the respondents highlighted that they still benefit from some of the material support provided through Terintambwe, such as their house and school materials for children. Participants also indicated that they still benefited from the training that they received, such as feeding practices.

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<sup>1</sup> See Devereux, S., Roelen, K., Sabates, R., Stoelinga, D. and A. Dyèvre (2015) Final Evaluation Report: Concern's Graduation Model Programme in Burundi. Brighton: Centre for Social Protection, Institute of Development Studies for full evaluation findings.

## Understanding post-programme graduation trajectories in Burundi

Many participants also felt that they are now in a better position to improve their lives again compared to others in the community who had not been part of the programme. The experience of starting a business, being part of a SILC and having improved their living conditions during the time of the programme means that participants feel more confident about being able to do this again in the future when conditions improve.

## Enablers and constrainers of graduation

Two factors were most important in causing people's living conditions to deteriorate after the end of the *Terintambwe* programme, namely the drought and instability. Lack of rain resulted in failed harvests, thereby causing reduced income and hunger. *Terintambwe* participants with greater diversity in income-generating activities were less badly affected but also experienced a drop in their income due to a general decrease of economic activity. Uncertainty in relation to the country's instability triggered coping strategies such as sale of assets and moving away to other communes or countries.

Other factors that contributed to declines in livelihoods included family disputes and migration to other collines, communes or countries. Participants indicated that husbands leaving their wives or vice versa or bad spousal relationships caused households to lose positive programme impacts. Migration included temporary moves to other communes, or more long-term moves to other countries. Reasons for leaving included escaping hunger, searching for work and responding to fears of instability. Longer term departures were strongly associated with worsening living conditions.

Factors that helped to respond to the drought and instability included the availability of assets, ownership of land and economic opportunities. Assets mostly provided a one-off source of cash for the purchase of food or other necessities. The benefits of owning land were more sustainable as it allowed participants to cultivate (despite the drought) or to rent out their land. *Terintambwe* participants who had managed to develop IGAs that did not rely on cultivation, such as hairdressing, fishing or transportation also doing better than others.

Strong household collaboration and dynamics also contributed to positive outcomes. Planning and collaboration between household members helped households to maintain some of the positive impacts of the programme. In other cases, other household members started contributing to income generation of the household, such as adolescent children starting work.

## The role of the Terintambwe programme

The research also asked participants about the importance of different components of the *Terintambwe* programme, even after the programme had ended. This includes the cash transfers, asset transfers, training and coaching, SILCs, school materials, health insurance, kitchen garden and mobile phone. The roles that these components kept playing in people's lives after the end of the programme varied greatly across components.

The monetary components – cash transfers and lump-sum asset transfers – were most important for maintaining positive change. During the programme period, they allowed for purchase of basic necessities and domestic assets, investments in productive assets, participation in SILCs and development of IGAs. After the programme, the role of the transfers was considered mostly important in terms of the assets that participants had been able to buy with them, as they could either be sold or still be used. The purchase of land was one of the more successful strategies to sustain livelihoods. The investment of cash into IGAs appeared

## Understanding post-programme graduation trajectories in Burundi

less helpful for sustainability of impacts as many former participants were unable to continue their businesses.

Participants also greatly valued the contribution of training and coaching. New knowledge about SILCs, IGAs and kitchen gardens was vital for the improvements that participants during the programme, and for maintaining them afterwards. This component also placed participants in a better position to start any new businesses or economic activities now that times are improving again, especially compared to non-participants. The training and coaching provided them with essential skills and knowledge but seemingly also having instilled a sense of confidence.

Experiences with SILCs were more mixed. They were greatly valued when they worked well during the programme period and immediately after, but their discontinuation has meant that many former participants no longer use the SILCs that were set up by the programme. SILC groups have a cycle of 12 months and members can choose to start a new cycle together or with other members. Some former participants started new SILC groups. These tend to include former *Terintambwe* participants and non-participants and are premised on a sense of mutual trust.

Sustainability of other support that was provided by the programme – mobile phones, kitchen gardens, health insurance cards and school materials – was also mixed. Some participants still used kitchen gardens and health insurance cards but others indicated that they were either too much work or too expensive to retain. School materials were mostly still in use and contributing to school attendance. However, materials were severely run down with no opportunity for replacement. Mobile phones were no longer in use because they were damaged, lost or stolen.

## Recommendations

This research clearly shows the challenges of sustaining the positive impacts of a graduation programme in a situation of large shocks such as drought and instability. Programme participants were better able to respond to negative events as they now had a more solid foundation, but experienced considerable drops in wealth and wellbeing. The research points to various programme recommendations for improving resilience of programme participants after graduation.

### >> Focus on durable investments

The productive and household assets that were obtained through the programme such as iron sheets and livestock helped households to fight hunger in the short-term as they were able to sell these for cash in hand. However, this coping strategy undermined people's livelihoods and their long-term resilience. Greater focus on durable investments may prevent the sale of assets as short-term strategy and support longer-term resilience. The purchase of land presents an ideal form of such durable investment, although this may not be possible for many programme participants given the country's high population density. Greater emphasis on management of assets during shocks in the training and coaching component of *Terintambwe* may create important awareness, although participants may only be able to act upon this awareness when they also receive additional material support in times of shock (see recommendations below).

### >> Wider diversification of IGAs

Heavy reliance of former participants on few IGAs, many of which are based on cultivation, made former participants vulnerable to climatic shocks. Programme participants who had started non-agricultural economic activities such as preparing and selling food, transportation of people, and fishing were more likely to maintain their wealth. Greater diversification of IGAs

## Understanding post-programme graduation trajectories in Burundi

within households also allows for withstanding shocks better. Supporting and encouraging a wider set of IGAs through Terintambwe, and focusing more specifically on non-agricultural IGAs in areas where this is possible (such as close to lakes), may improve resilience of participants after the programme comes to an end.

### >> Greater focus on household dynamics

Household disputes and tensions were commonly associated with negative household trajectories, while strong collaboration between spouses and household members was considered important for maintaining and improving wealth. This calls for a greater focus on the role of household dynamics in the training and coaching component of *Terintambwe*. The roll-out of the 'Engaging Men' approach may serve as a useful starting point for addressing this issue. CDAs playing a proactive role will also be crucial for identifying issues at household level, and responding to those. This may require further training, but also more time for engagement with each household.

### >> Setting up a contingency fund

Notwithstanding the possibilities for strengthening *Terintambwe* and its components within the programme period, findings strongly suggest the need for emergency support after the end of the programme. Programme participants did receive an additional transfer immediately at the end of the programme in anticipation of the negative shocks and their consequences, but this did not suffice. Emergency support at the height of shocks such as a drought can help to avoid the widespread sale of assets in order to meet immediate needs. The establishment of a contingency fund would allow for a quick and targeted response, the need for which is particularly crucial in a context of recurring climatic shocks such as Kirundo.

### >> Continued support for micro-credit or savings schemes

Support to SILCs or other forms of micro-credit or savings schemes after the end of the programme may help to ensure the sustainability of access to savings and credit. This is particularly important in the case of shocks that affect everybody in the community and there is widespread lack of cash. Discontinuation of SILCs harms members' trust in these mechanisms, and may leave them unwilling to engage in them again on their own account. This leaves former participants vulnerable to expensive loans. The provision of emergency support as discussed above could help to prevent such discontinuation, although only if it would extend to all community members (as they are also part of SILCs). Sustained community engagement in support of SILCs, for example by working with well-respected community volunteers that can mediate in cases of conflict or support establishment of new groups, or the establishment of linkages to reputable micro-credit facilities are other options to be explored.

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